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SIPDIS

DEPT ALSO FOR AF/S, IIP/SEG (ALVIN MURPHY, GRETCHEN WEINTRAUB)

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: LESOTHO: SPEAKER HITS HOME RUN FOR EXPORT DIVERSIFICATION

REF: SMITH-WEINTRAUB E-MAILS (MARCH-JUNE 2008)

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11. SUMMARY: The week of June 2, IIP speaker Phyllis Shearer-Jones visited Lesotho and engaged in an intense program on the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and the diversification of Lesotho's exports to the United States. Ms. Jones addressed various interest groups including apparel manufacturers, entrepreneurs interested in export opportunities, small to medium sized enterprise owners, university academics, government officials, and local private businesswomen. Embassy Maseru's Public Affairs Section (PAS) received exactly what it wanted from this program -- a dynamic, hands-on presenter who could explain to small business owners (especially in the fledgling aloe products industry) exactly what steps they should take to become exporters under AGOA. The apex of the visit, an all-day workshop with potential aloe exporters co-sponsored by the Prime Minister's Office, was an unqualified success. Immediate results of the program included local government officials pledging to sponsor aloe industry representatives at the upcoming July AGOA forum in Washington. We hope that the mid-term results of this program will include new AGOA-eligible export product lines which will provide economic growth opportunities for this developing country. END SUMMARY.

12. Below is Embassy Maseru's official review of Phyllis Shearer-Jones' speaker program:

1A. NAME OF SPEAKER AND DATE OF PROGRAM

Name: Phyllis Shearer-Jones

Date: June 1-6, 2008

Program: To interact with Lesotho's current and potential manufacturers of exportable products, as well as academics and government officials, on the diversification of Lesotho's exports under AGOA, as well as to provide the latest information on changes to AGOA legislation.

1B. SUMMARY OF TOPICS, VENUES, AND AUDEINCES ADDRESSED

Embassy Maseru's Public Affairs Section arranged presentations and workshops for Ms. Shearer-Jones during her five-day program at: 1) Lesotho National Development Corporation; 2) Shining Century and Precious Garments Textile Factories; 3) local small and medium enterprises; 4) the aloe product manufacturers coalition (Maseru Sun Hotel); 5) the Inter-Ministerial Task Team (Ministry of Trade); 6) the National University of Lesotho; and 7) various media houses.

The program's agenda was to provide information and to facilitate discussion on expanding AGOA export opportunities by diversifying beyond textiles and apparel while continuing to maintain success in these established industry sectors. In order to secure the participation of the Lesotho aloe industry

in Ms. Shearer-Jones's seminar, PAS partnered with the Lesotho Smart Partnership Office, a sub-unit of the Prime Minister's Office, which organized a full-day conference on AGOA and breaking into the U.S. market for that industry.

MS. JONES' ENGAGEMENTS WERE LOCATED AT:

-- Maseru Sun Convention Center (Sponsored by the Prime Minister's Office)

Audience: 40 representatives from aloe producers

-- Ministry of Trade (Inter-Ministerial Task Team)

Audience: 25 representatives from various industries, including the Assistant Minister and Deputy Principal Secretary of Trade

-- Lesotho National Development Corporation

Audience: LNDC Chief Executive Officer

-- Lesotho Textile Exporters Association

Audience: 10 managers of various factories

-- National University of Lesotho

Audience: 20 staff members, faculty of Economics and Development Studies Department

-- Meeting with Lesotho Chamber of Commerce

Audience: 10 private sector representatives

-- Mohloli Chamber of Commerce

Audience: 10 private sector representatives

-- Global Conferences and Seminars

Audience: Managing Director and staff

Media engagements:

Lesotho Television

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People's Choice Radio

Informative Newspaper

Lesotho Times

The Monitor

C. AUDIENCE SIZE

By the estimates quoted above, this program directly reached approximately 125 people. Coupled with media interviews, the audience size can be estimated at several thousand.

D. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SPEAKER IN COMMUNICATING INTENDED MESSAGES TO TARGET AUDIENCE

Economic development is a key Mission Strategic Plan goal of Embassy Maseru, and AGOA is one of the mission's most effective tools for achieving it. Ms. Jones was very effective in promoting an improved understanding of AGOA, including clarification on recent changes in the legislation and how it could affect Lesotho. This program allowed the Embassy to provide up-to-the-minute information on AGOA to high-ranking government officials and entrepreneurial business owners. As this was the speaker's third time in Lesotho addressing AGOA issues (she previously visited while working for the U.S. Trade Representative), she was able to provide local historical insights regarding issues she faced during previous meetings with the government and private sector stakeholders.

E. QUALITY OF IIP SUPPORT

Embassy Maseru greatly appreciates IIP's support during the entirety of this program. The lines of communication between our post and Program Officer Gretchen Weintraub were open, effective, and constant. As a "PD-light" post with limited resources, Embassy Maseru is delighted to have been offered this opportunity which helped us to advance our Mission Strategic Plan goals. We were in frequent communication with IIP

regarding Ms. Shearer-Jones's schedule and requirements, and appreciated IIP's pre-departure coordination with the speaker.

F. IMMEDIATE RESULT/IMPACT

This high-impact program had several immediate results: 1) during the program, the Lesotho Smart Partnership Office announced that they would sponsor three alooe producers as part of Lesotho's delegation to the July AGOA forum in Washington, demonstrating that they are increasingly taking the challenge of export diversification seriously; 2) the speaker diminished the misperception that AGOA is an opportunity geared exclusively for the textile industry; 3) the speaker bolstered the concept that exporting to the U.S. is possible for small businesses; and 4) the speaker informed policy makers in Lesotho's government and private sector of changes in AGOA legislation so that they can respond in their best interests. In the medium term, we hope that this program will lead to substantive new export diversification initiatives.

G. PRESS PLACEMENT REPORTING

Embassy Maseru arranged media interviews with People's Choice FM radio, Lesotho Television, Informative Newspaper, Lesotho Times, and The Monitor. We estimate that the viewership of Lesotho Television is approximately 30,000, and People's Choice FM has an estimated listenership of about 10,000. Informative Newspaper, Lesotho Times, and The Monitor have circulations of approximately 5,000 each.

MURPHY